Normality can be understood as a complex but fleeting construct of reintegrated specialised normalities. Because it influences our reality, it cannot be retrospectively applied to other societies. However, some 'anthropological constants' might be considered supra-historical. Attributing a person's or character's behaviour to such biological factors will overrule the respective normality, but only generate a very limited explanation, usually at the cost of free will.

Labelling

Wherever there is 'normality', there is also deviance. Yet, while high cholesterol may cause health issues, it does not usually result in social marginalisation, since it is mostly private and thus invisible. On the other hand, a mere rumour can result in social stigmatisation, a concept first coined by Erving Goffman: If a person possesses an attribute that makes them fall out of an expected social category in an undesirable way, this attribute is called a stigma (11). Even labels, including 'disabled', 'gifted', 'robotic', or indeed 'autistic', can signify such an attribute and thus deviance. While it is important to bear in mind that stigmata are arbitrary in the sense that they, too, are linked to power, labels can have very real consequences.

According to Goffman, there are three types of stigma; bodily marks, e.g. physical disabilities, 'blemishes of character', including a 'weak will', dishonesty or mental disorder, and what he calls 'tribal stigma', referring to race, nation, or religion. The latter he describes as a "stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family" (12). Apart from his choice of words, Goffman's theory of stigma is still widely accepted. I thus suggest differentiating physical, mental, and class-related stigmata.

I also suggest differentiating visible and invisible deviance. Bodily marks are externally visible and may lead to instant stigmatisation. Here, 'obvious' ontological aspects are linked to assumptions made about an individual (see Chapter 3, Stereotypes). Mental stigmata, on the other hand, are per Keckeisen's definition negotiated and thus

'invisible'. However, a perceived mental stigma can become so widely known within a community that it turns into something akin to a bodily mark since the knowledge of the stigma will make people biased even before entering into a conversation with the individual. In other words, a perceived deviance can become as encompassing as a visible stigma, but with the twist that it could potentially be lost upon entering a different community, at least up until the point an individual's deviance is renegotiated.

Generally speaking, one can define stigmatisation as the ascription of deviance as an ontological status. Keckeisen calls this process labelling (49). Thus, labelling and stigmatisation technically refer to the same instance of ascribing deviance, with the difference that the first explicitly institutionalises the stigma in the form of a diagnosis, a criminal record, or some other form of bureaucratic categorisation. In a way, such a label makes the stigma 'official', i.e. indisputably normative.

Consequently, not all deviance results in stigmatisation. The difference between situational deviance and stigma lies in its significance for the subject. Temporary deviance will not necessarily result in stigmatisation and because most individuals deviate from the norm sometimes, these are insufficient grounds to base a stigma on. Contrary to that, a stigma will necessarily result in continued deviance since it is the consequence of labelling. For example, a person may be considered odd by their colleagues without actually being different. Here, their deviance is decided for them, and they have to accept it within the confines of the workspace. According to the Thomas theorem, "[i]f men define situations as real they are real in their consequences" (Chandler and Munday 433). This theory later became known as a self-fulfilling prophecy (433). In the example at hand, the label makes the colleagues biased, causing them to continually perceive the actions of this particular individual as deviant. However, although this may cause feelings of powerlessness or even result in instances of bullying, it is temporary and locally limited. Thus, the individual must accept the collegial judgment, for it metaphorically lost the negotiations, but it does not have to internalise the stigma.

While Goffman assumes an ontological basis for the stigma, Keckeisen emphasises the fact that labels, too, are negotiated by accusation

and justification, but within a wider community (Keckeisen 49). However, because the social impact is so strong, the repercussions of labelling force the 'defeated' individual to not only accept the accusation but to re-organise their selves. Since the accusation was deemed 'true' by those more powerful, it becomes a 'new truth' about this subject.[22] Even if the accused maintain their innocence ('their perspective of reality'), they will be overruled. Ultimately, then, although at times rather Kafkaesque, the individual will integrate their deviance into their self-perception, thus making it their own 'truth', too (39). Instances in which an individual's behaviour is negotiated and judged as deviant can thus become so-called self-defining memories:

> Similar to life-story memories [which are linked to long-term goals], self-defining memories are vivid, affectively intense, and well-rehearsed. They build on life-story memories by connecting to other significant memories across lifetime periods that share their themes and narrative sequences. They reflect individuals' most enduring concerns (e.g., achievement, intimacy, spirituality) and/or unresolved conflicts (e.g., sibling rivalry, ambivalence about a parental figure, addictive tendencies). (Singer et al. 572)

On a related note, self and identity are not considered to be the same:

> To the extent that a person's self-understanding is integrated synchronically and diachronically such that it situates him or her into a meaningful psychosocial niche and provides his or her life with some degree of unity and purpose, that person 'has' identity. (McAdams 102)

One can thus say that once the deviant status is integrated into the self, it becomes part of the identity. Technically, this turns a label into a stigma.

I believe, the term 'label' carries the notion of something externally applied and I will thus use it to emphasise the fact that deviance is negotiated. However, I will also continue to use the term 'stigma' to refer to

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22   But again, there is no true or false, merely power.

the negative implications such deviance has for any individual labelled. Certainly, 'label' is more neutral than stigma in terms of their negative associations. Yet, both 'label' and 'stigma' may lead to stereotypical assumptions being made about the individual.

Upon being labelled, the subject becomes socially categorised which defines their field of action. Indeed, labelling never occurs simultaneously with deviance but is always a subsequent process (Keckeisen 49). Rather, there are two situations, that of deviant behaviour and that of labelling it as such (48–49). However, the label will activate the primacy effect as well as the confirmation bias, thus making it more likely that an individual's behaviour is perceived as deviant. The fact that people will judge a person's behaviour as 'symptomatic', either by generalisation (inferred from a singular event) or by assumption (hear-say) makes them biased and subsequently affects all interactions. Keckeisen theorises that the labelling and consequent sanctioning of 'deviant' behaviour creates general expectations towards such an individual. Subsequently, the whole individual is perceived as deviant, often resulting in exclusion and social isolation. Thus restricted in their movements, the individual's behaviour will necessarily become increasingly deviant. At this point, even 'normal' behaviour might be perceived as deviant. Keckeisen suggests that the agent will continue to adapt their behaviour to the situation to the best of their knowledge, therefore being able to rationally justify their actions. However, when denied the confirmation by others, the agent's identity will increasingly come under pressure, eventually leading to serious consequences (cf. Keckeisen 38–39).[23]

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23   "Die Etikettierung und Sanktionierung einer (vielleicht unbeabsichtigten, vielleicht ephemeren) Verhaltensweise als 'deviant' wird zur Grundlage von Typisierungen und Erwartungen gegenüber dem so Definierten, die es diesem unmöglich machen, sich in der Interaktion mit anderen so zu verhalten, 'als ob nichts geschehen wäre'. … Die Generalisierung des diskreditierenden Urteils (des 'labels'), der Schluß von der abweichenden Verhaltensweise auf die ganze Person und in deren Gefolge die soziale Isolierung und Ausstoßung sowie die Einschränkung des materiellen Handlungsspielraums – alle diese Elemente der gesellschaftlichen Reaktion verändern das 'Symbol- und Aktionsfeld' … derart, daß 'normale' Verhaltensweisen zunehmend unmöglich werden. In diesem sich

I have already theorised that it is the label – intentionally alluded to or retrospectively applied by someone other than the author – that renders characters deviant. Characters that are labelled 'autistic' within the meta-discourse might be (re-)read differently but are otherwise not affected by such a label. However, autists in real life will suffer equally real consequences. In Chapter 3.3 I discussed Loftis's critique of negative stereotypes associated with Sherlock Holmes. Here, the retrospectively applied label 'autistic' led to autists being likened to Holmes. Thus, even labelling fictional characters may impact (public) stereotypes and therefore affect the treatment of autists. While a label might draw positive attention to a character and perhaps even educate people on a certain concept, this technique remains questionable. After all, it raises the question of who benefits from such ascriptions – will it foster awareness for autists in real life or does it boil down to sensational journalism?

Deviance in Fiction – *The London Eye Mystery*

Arguably, *The London Eye Mystery* portrays the least instances of othering and subsequent harassment of all novels examined. Yet, it becomes obvious that Ted is 'not normal' by the way other characters react to and interact with him. In this section, I wish to explore how normality and deviance are negotiated within the novel.

As a result of being deviant, Ted struggles to make friends among his classmates. Moreover, Ted's mother, as well as his sister and his teacher, tend to make up rules that are supposed to help him be 'more normal'. For example, Ted prefers to wear his school uniform even during the holidays, even though his sister advises him "to put on a T-shirt and jeans and be 'normal and chilled'" (*London Eye Mystery* 22).

The arrival of his aunt Gloria represents an instance of an outsider judging the family. Because she is very blunt and openly voices

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eskalierenden Wechselspiel gerät die Identität des Kontrollierten in dem Maße unter Druck, in dem ihr die Bestätigung durch andere verweigert wird." (Keckeisen 38–39)